

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

HEALTH
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SERVICES



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Arlington Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) consists of the following divisions:

- Health Department
 - Prevention Services
- Council on Aging
- Veterans Services
- Arlington Youth Counseling Center (AYCC)
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion

The Department also coordinates the activities of the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Health
- AYCC Advisory Board (previously, Board of Youth Services)
- Council on Aging
- Veterans Council
- Disability Commission
- Human Rights Commission
- Rainbow Commission

HHS is responsible for enhancing and promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of Arlington community members. Through prevention, engagement, and inclusion, HHS protects and assists those who live, learn, work, play, and pray in Arlington. To accomplish the mission of HHS, the Department relies on many different sources of funding including Town, state, and federal funds, grants, foundation funding, and donations. Additionally, hundreds of volunteers assist with carrying out the Department's mission.



First Annual Resource and Connections Fair.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

BOARD OF HEALTH

The mission of Arlington's Board of Health is to protect the public health of the town through enforcement of health codes and regulations, while promoting a healthy community. The Board of Health is a statutory board comprised of three community members at large, one of whom must be a physician, appointed by the Town Manager for three-year terms. The Board holds public meetings and conducts public hearings as necessary to evaluate data, establish regulations, and review health code violations. In 2023 the Board met on 9 occasions which included 15 hearings as well as various discussions and updates pertaining to public health issues in the community. Topics include, but are not limited to, violation and enforcement proceedings associated with tobacco sales to minors; the issuance of permits for Keeping of Hens, Body Art Practitioners, and Biotech Operations; the approval of variances from Arlington's Body Art Regulations and the Massachusetts Food Code Regulations; and the appointment of an agent of the Board of Health to assist with enforcement of Arlington's tobacco control regulations.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Health Department is located at 27 Maple Street in the Arlington Community Center. The Department handles day-to-day procedural operations and administrative duties associated with the Board of Health. The Department is required by State statutes and regulations to perform many duties relative to the protection of public health and safety, the control of disease, the promotion of safe and sanitary living conditions, and the protection of the environment from damage and pollution. These mandated requirements are fulfilled by environmental health and public health nursing staff within the Health Department. The Department is comprised of a Public Health Director, two Health Compliance Officers, one Office Manager, two part-time Public Health Nurses, a part-time Sealer of Weights and Measures, and the Prevention Services Coordinator.

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Health Department booth at the Resource and Connections Fair.

Environmental Health

Included below are types of permits and inspections conducted by the environmental health division.

Permits Issued	2020	2021	2022	2023
Food	198	216	269	295
Tobacco	19	19	19	19
Waste Hauler	16	17	18	15
Funeral Director	7	7	7	7
Tanning Establishment	1	0	1	1
Public Pool	4	8	8	8
Public Beach	2	3	3	3
Ice Rink	0	0	0	0
Keeping of Hens	17	22	23	20
Camps	4	12	7	10
Body Art Establishment	1	3	3	3
Body Art Practitioner	2	9	7	7
Total	271	316	364	388

Inspection Type	2020	2021	2022	2023
Food Establishment & Temporary Food Event*	254	304	350	402
Tobacco Compliance Check	20	26	55	44
Housing	14	166	159	134
Demolition Inspection	7	35	23	13
Nuisance Inspection	124	97	238	372
Keeping of Hens	4	25	23	19
Bodywork Establishment	1	1	4	1
Total	424	654	852	985

*Temporary food event inspections include: Farmers' Market, Feast of the East, Town Day, and other community events throughout the year.

Type of Food Permits Issued	2020	2021	2022	2023
Food Establishment Permits	175	174	163	176
Mobile Food Permits	0	3	3	4
Residential Kitchen Permits	9	9	5	7
Farmers Market Permits	7	10	9	11
Temporary Event Food Permit	7	20	94	12

Additional Environmental Health Highlights from 2023

- Conducted 4 community sharps collection events.
- Hosted a community-wide forum to discuss environmentally friendly approaches to rodent control.
- Participated in a town-wide forum to discuss health concerns associated with artificial turf fields.
- Staffed educational booths at National Night Out and Town Day to raise awareness about vector borne diseases, sun safety, substance use prevention/treatment, and environmentally friendly pest control methods.
- Organized an interdepartmental Emergency Preparedness table top exercise in collaboration with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) focusing on planning for the arrival of migrant families.
- Provided outreach, education, and enforcement to the community in response to bylaw changes associated with the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.
- Collaborated with the Town Manager's Office to implement a new policy prohibiting the use of Second Generation Rodenticides (SGAR's) on Town owned property.

Public Health Nursing

The Public Health Nursing (PHN) team works to promote a healthy community by protecting the public's health and well-being through education, prevention, and communicable disease surveillance and investigation. The PHN team consists of two part-time registered nurses. Their primary role is to monitor, investigate and follow-up on reports of communicable disease in Arlington. This process varies based on the type of disease and the way in which the disease may be spread, but typically involves reviewing individual cases, lab work, medical notes, and obtaining additional personal and demographic information. The investigation may also

require the PHN team to interview close contacts of the patient and connect/consult with community health providers, primary care physicians, medical labs, hospital personnel, and state medical officials. Examples of these cases include TB, Covid-19, Measles, Monkey Pox, Foodborne Illnesses, etc. Other disease such Influenza, Lyme, and Hepatitis C may only require the PHN team to review the demographics and/or lab work, while also acknowledging that the case has been received by our community.

Communicable Disease Surveillance

In 2023 there were 1,107 cases of communicable disease reported to the Health Department. Of these diseases, 172 required a full investigation and 132 required review and acknowledgement from our PHN team. The additional 803 diseases are attributed to Covid-19 which were monitored, acknowledged, and investigated, as needed and in accordance with Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) prioritization guidelines, through our public health contact tracing collaborative grant with the cities of Somerville and Medford. High priority Covid-19 cases (such as outbreaks at long term facilities, school/childcare related cases, and other clusters) were directly reported to our nursing team for additional follow up as needed. In addition to communicable disease surveillance, Arlington participated in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Respiratory Surveillance Pilot Program to increase access to testing for Flu, Covid-19 and RSV for residents of Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities in town.

Vaccinations

In 2023 the PHN team vaccinated over 300 individuals against influenza. Vaccinations were provided at 5 different clinics (4 at senior housing buildings and 1 at the community center) in partnership with the Arlington Housing Authority and Arlington Council on Aging. The PHN team also coordinated vaccination planning meetings, the purchase of influenza vaccine, and the annual enrollment process for MDPH's vaccine program.

Emergency Preparedness

The PHN team attends regular meetings of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Coalition to work collaboratively with our regional partners to meet the goals associated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the MDPH Emergency Preparedness initiatives. In 2023, the PHN team worked closely with MDPH and Town officials to welcome newcomer families to Arlington. Over the course of several events, the PHN team assisted these families by conducting interviews, collecting medical information, reviewing medical records, assessing medical needs, coordinating transportation for medical

treatment, administering vaccinations, and assisting our community partners in connecting families to local services and enrolling them in Mass Health.

Opioid Settlement Funds

In 2023 the PHN team took a lead role in conducting an assessment of the substance use trends in Arlington. As part of this process, the PHN team attended state Opioid Task Force meeting, researched existing data sources, and facilitated key informant interviews among Town staff and community partners to gather information about substance use trends and services in Arlington. This data was then used to help assist with determining how Opioid Settlement Funds would be utilized in Arlington.

Community Education

The PHN team acts as a regular resource for residents with questions related to infectious disease, isolation and quarantine, immunization, chronic disease, and general health inquiries. Education is primarily offered on an individual basis through email or phone inquiries. However, the PHN team also partnered with Children's Hospital Boston and Massachusetts Poison Center to offer a Poison Prevention Presentation for parents of young children.

Sealer of Weights and Measures

The Sealer of Weights and Measures is responsible for enforcing federal, state, and local laws that set a standard for accuracy requirements for all commercial devices used in the weighing and or measuring of any item sold by weight, volume, measure, or count. In 2023 this position was largely vacant and the Department relied heavily on various other communities to assist with fulfilling the annual duties and/or complaints. The Department looks forward to working with our newly hired Sealer in 2024 to re-establish and revamp our Sealer of Weights Measures division.

Prevention Services

Prevention Services has had a busy year. A Prevention Services Manager was hired in May 2023. The Prevention Services Manager has been working on several initiatives including the distribution of the lifesaving overdose reversal medication naloxone (Narcan) to the community, community engaged planning for the expenditure of funds received from Opioid Settlements, youth prevention programming through a state funded MassCall3B grant, and data collection, and project management for recovery coaching services. The Prevention Services Manager became a part of the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services Community Naloxone Program in June, and since then has distributed 426 doses of naloxone to community members and Town employees and trained approximately 150 individuals in

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its administration. In June 2023 a survey was launched, and focus groups were held to collect input from people with lived experience on the use of funds received from Opioid Settlements. Based on this information as well as Town and state level data, the Prevention Services Manager was able to create a Year 1 budget for the use of these funds. Through collaboration with the cities of Somerville and Everett, and with the Town of Lexington, the Prevention Services Manager was able to draft a logic model and workplan for the use of funds to support youth substance use prevention. Additionally, a process has been developed for more granular data collection about the Town's recovery coaching program.

In 2023 the first annual International Overdose Awareness Day vigil was held at Calvary Church on August 31st. In 2024 the Prevention Services Manager hopes to continue to increase the availability of naloxone, implement the MassCall3 prevention workplan, continue to spend Opioid Settlement funding, and continue to develop data collection processes related to substance use and addiction.

COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD

The Council on Aging Board met monthly throughout 2023 on the 3rd Thursday of the month with Michael Quinn as Chair. The board worked through the spring season to help guide the Parking Permit Advocacy Volunteer Group through the appropriate processes, which lead to the program being approved by the Select Board as a pilot in June 2023. Other highlights of COA Board activities for the year included promoting the COA at Town Day, leading various programs for seniors at the Community Center, assisting with meal deliveries on Thanksgiving morning, coordinating AARP Tax Preparation volunteers, and/or assisting with the annual Warm Wishes program. 2023 programs initiated by Board Members included Sand/Salt Bucket Deliveries with the Boy Scouts, a 'Being Your Own Advocate' Presentation, and Spring Yard Clean Up assistance with the Rotary Club. Board Members also assisted with the end of year giving campaign for the Emergency Fund under the Health and Human Services Charitable Corporation.



Jazz Concert outside the Arlington Community Center.

COUNCIL ON AGING

The Council on Aging (COA), a Division of Health and Human Services, is a community based social services organization that supports residents age 60 and over in Arlington. The COA has 5 full-time staff and 10 part-time staff, along with over 300 volunteers.

2023 was a year of growth and record attendance in the newly renovated Arlington Community Center. Over 5,100 unique older adults participated in COA programs and services throughout the year. Programs realized over 40% growth in participation and additional classes were added through the year to accommodate the growing participation.

COA Highlights from 2023

Sponsored the first ever COA Parking Permit program, which was approved by the Select Board in June 2023 after a group of vibrant and energetic older adults advocated for support in the community. Over 120 residents supported the program at the select board meeting where the Pilot program was approved. The program allows Arlington Residents, age 65+ to apply for one parking sticker per address. The sticker allows for free parking at metered spots in Arlington, and in municipal parking lots, for up to 4 hours. It also allows for all-day parking along Maple Street and Academy Street during the hours the COA is open for programs. Over 1,400 COA Parking Stickers have been distributed to residents in the community since the program launched in September 2023. There is no charge to residents who participate in the program.

Expanded programmatic offerings for older adults, including various levels of fitness and mindfulness classes, Art Therapy classes, expanded cooking and nutrition education, a diverse list of support groups, Intergenerational programs such as Technology Help, various theater and acting classes, scrabble, Mahjongg, Cribbage, and other games, new affinity groups and plenty of time for dropping in to casually visit with neighbors in the café or drop-in room. Each month the Community Center also hosts themed luncheons and special events. Three days per week, lunches are served by Minuteman Senior Services, providing the social connection of a congregate meal.



COA Fitness Class in Community Room.

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Expanded programs for LGBTQIA+ older adults and friends. Monthly groups and special events were held throughout the year, including a community wide Sage Table event in November and special events for Pride Month in June. The COA also held “modern pronouns” in 2023 to educate the community.

Created a new support group for caregivers of people living with dementia and memory impairment, in accordance with our Age and Dementia Friendly Action Plan.

Managed a robust COA Transportation program, a crucial need for the Town, completing nearly 9,000 rides in 2023. In addition to running two fully accessible passenger vans in Town 5-days a week, the program also offers partnerships with Uber, Arlington Belmont Taxi for discounted taxi vouchers, a volunteer medical escort program for out-of-Town appointments, and transportation to Arlington EATS market. The COA also continues to run the Town-wide Sanborn Foundation transportation program, scheduling rides to cancer related appointments at no cost to the rider.

COA Social Workers provided over 4,000 one on-one direct appointments with Arlington seniors via home visits, office appointments, or phone consultation. Most of the assistance was focused on financial issues related to housing and aging in place.

Distributed \$18,000 to older adults in need through the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief Fund, \$30,000 through the Senior Property Tax Work off program, \$4,500 through the Harry Barber Volunteer Program, \$8,000 through the Sevoyan Dental Assistance, \$39,000 through the newly created Emergency Relief Fund, \$25,000 in Emergency Heating Assistance and \$40,000 of financial assistance through other specific trusts and special programs.

Connected over 220 residents with volunteer SHINE Councilors for Medicare enrollment assistance and financial and/or legal assistance, continued as a certified SNAP outreach and application provider, conducting outreach, and assisting with applications for hundreds of neighbors. The COA also continued providing support to residents applying for LYHEAP Fuel Assistance with both new applications and renewals.

Delivered 125 turkey dinners to isolated older adults on Thanksgiving Day with the help of over 50 volunteers.

Distributed 75 holiday gift bags to homebound older adults through our 6th annual Warm Wishes program, with the assistance of COA volunteers and the Arlington Police Department.

Oversaw the Technology Loan Library Program, which connected 140 older adults to the virtual world by lending out devices such as Chromebooks and hot spots.

VETERANS' SERVICES

Veterans' Services, a division of Health and Human Services led by the Director of Veterans' Services, provides support and essential services to Arlington veterans and their dependents. As the local administrator of the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Veterans Services program, the Director of Veterans' Services delivers financial assistance to veterans who meet income and asset requirements, as required under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 115. The Veterans' Services Director also aids Arlington veterans with the preparation and submission of applications for various benefits, including benefits administered by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (also called the Veterans Administration), the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Veterans Services, and a range of public or private organization offering benefits to veterans. In addition to providing direct support to veterans, the Veterans' Services Director also works closely with the Arlington Veterans Council and external partners to commemorate the sacrifices Arlington residents made in the military services of the United States of America and Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Finally, in collaboration with the Arlington Veterans Council, the Veterans' Services Director also develops and implements initiatives that advance the well-being of Arlington's veterans and their families, friends, and communities.



Veterans Services Director, Colonel Philip J. McGovern at the 2023 Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington Fire Headquarters.

2023 Veteran Services Highlights

The past year was a time of transition for Arlington's Veterans Services Department, with the retirement of longtime Director Jeff Chunglo in June. The Town is immensely grateful to Jeff for his tireless service to benefit Arlington's veterans and the whole community. In November the Town hired Philip J. McGovern of Woburn as the new Director of Veterans Services. Arlington is also extraordinarily grateful to Laura Munsey of the Health and Human Services Department who, in addition to her own workload, maintained continuity by managing the Town's Veterans Services workload during several month's vacancy in the Director's position.

The Town and its residents demonstrated their deep commitment to commemoration of the sacrifices Arlington residents have made in the military services through carefully planned ceremonies to observe Memorial Day in May and Veterans Day in November. Many organized groups and individual residents turned out to participate in-person and many others watched coverage of the observances at home on ACMi TV.

In December the Town selected Stantec Planning and Landscape Architecture, P.C. of Boston to perform the Design Phase of the Veterans Memorial Park Revitalization Project. At the same time the Veterans Services Department continued efforts to develop a comprehensive list of Arlington veterans for the new Honor Roll monument that will be a major feature of the revitalized park.

During the past year the federal Veterans Administration provided a total of \$4,857,122.52 to Arlington veterans, including compensation for service-connected disabilities, non-disability pensions, dependency and indemnity compensation, and death benefits.

Future Goals

The Veterans' Services Department will continue to work closely with the Veterans Council and community partners to:

- Plan, prepare for, and implement Arlington's annual commemorations of military service and sacrifice. Memorial Day planning will occur in February and March with preparatory activities in April and May, and implementation during the Memorial Day period of May. Similarly, Veterans Day planning will occur in August and September with preparatory activities in October, and implementation during the Veterans Day period of November.
- Conceive, develop, plan, and implement initiatives that advance the well-being of Arlington's veterans and their families, friends, and communities.
- The Veterans Department and Veterans Council will work closely and openly with Town leadership, Stantec Planning and Landscape Architecture, P.C., the Arlington Public Memorial Committee, other Town departments, Veterans Memorial Park neighbors, and Arlington's residents throughout Phase I of the Veterans Memorial Park Revitalization Project, when Stantec will perform the detailed design of the project. At the same time the Veterans Department will continue to develop a comprehensive list of Arlington veterans for the new Honor Roll monument that will be a major feature of the revitalized park and work closely with Town leadership to identify and pursue funding

sources for eventual construction of the revitalized park.

- The Veterans Department will continue to engage the community and assist our veterans. This will include continued efforts to increase public awareness of recent legislative expansion of benefits to veterans of all eras. In addition, the department will assess current needs and existing programs to identify opportunities for future policy, regulatory, or legislative changes required to continue advancing the well-being of Arlington's veterans.



ARLINGTON YOUTH COUNSELING CENTER (AYCC)

The Arlington Youth Counseling Center (AYCC) is a state-licensed, community-based mental health center serving Arlington youth (ages 3-21) and their families. AYCC is the leading provider of outpatient and school-based child and adolescent mental health services in Arlington, offering individual, group, and family counseling, psychiatric evaluation, and medication management. Central to its mission, AYCC is committed to ensuring that all community youth and families have access to comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and high-quality mental health care, regardless of their ability to pay. In addition to mental health services, AYCC oversees First Step, a support group for people who have experienced domestic violence and offers community resource coordination and case management services to Arlington residents experiencing unmet basic needs.

2023 AYCC Highlights

- Provided mental health services to a total of 425 children, teens, and adult caregivers, a 15% increase over 2022. 135 clients of those clients were new to AYCC in 2023. Roughly 30% of AYCC clients were enrolled in a public insurance plan or received income-based grant funding from AYCC.
- Conducted a total of 9,932 sessions (including psychotherapy, psychiatric evaluation, and medication treatment), as well as 41 group sessions. 2,809 of all sessions were conducted via telehealth. Annual sessions were up from 8,048 in 2022.

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- Provided an additional 612 hours of clinical consultation and care coordination to AYCC families.
- Provided 1,324 counseling sessions to 99 Arlington Public School students, including students in Arlington's METCO program, through AYCC's school-based Project Success program.
- Hired two new full-time clinicians and one part-time clinician to address the growing AYCC waitlist of community youth and families seeking mental health services at AYCC.
- Conducted three school-based and two clinic-based therapeutic groups for Arlington children and adolescents. Group topics included: music therapy, art therapy, social emotional skills, and coping strategies skills.
- Trained 18 AYCC clinicians on Solution Focused Therapy (short-term therapy) and provided short-term therapy to 30 waitlisted families over the summer.
- Collaborated with Robbins Library and the Rainbow Commission to provide supervision and support to middle school and high school attendees of the annual Pride Prom.
- Engaged over 75 Arlington residents in case management services to assess unmet basic needs and facilitate access to local and statewide resources and assistance programs. Additionally, provided resource coordination and support to 16 migrant families sheltering in Arlington.
- Participated in the Town's first annual Community Resource and Connections Fair, organized by AYCC's Community Resource Specialist, in partnership with DEI's Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator.
- Coordinated the Holiday Help fundraising campaign and assistance program. Through the generous support of community members, civic groups, churches, schools and local businesses, Holiday Help raised nearly \$30,000, which assisted 192 families in purchasing gifts for 330 children during the holiday season.
- Collaborated with the Board of Youth Services (now, the AYCC Advisory Board) to rename and update the Board's charter vote to better reflect the role and work of board members, and to provide additional flexibility in the board composition.
- Collaborated with the AYCC Advisory Board on a successful year-end fundraising appeal. Through the generous support of community members and local businesses, AYCC and the BYS raised over \$35,000 to support youth mental health services at

AYCC.

- Partnered with the Arlington Health and Human Services Charitable Corporation to establish a Migrant Families Relief Fund to support the essential needs of migrant families who had recently arrived in Massachusetts and were being sheltered in Arlington. Through an end of year appeal, AYCC/HHS raised over \$11,000 in relief funding, and received a \$10,000 Clinton Family Fund grant, to support identified existing needs and future housing needs for sheltered migrant families in Arlington.



AYCC Staff Meeting and Holiday Cookie Swap.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Division of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for leading the racial equity initiatives laid out by the Town. The DEI Division responds to questions, concerns, and complaints that pertain to ADA compliance, and cooperates with other departments to ensure the ADA Self-Evaluation Transition and Implementation Plan is being used and considered as projects across Town develop. The DEI Division collaborates with departments, boards, and commissions, community organizations, and faith communities across the Town to build supportive partnerships and strategize for increased community engagement to advance equity goals. The DEI Division manages and coordinates the work of the Human Rights Commission, LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission, and Disability Commission, including planning and executing programming and managing budgets.

DEI Training, Education and Organizational Structure

- Completed the Community Equity Audit, which began in 2022 with Opportunity Consulting, and hosted a public presentation of the findings and recommendations.
- Completed the Racial Equity and DEI work-

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shops with Strategy Matters and incorporated the learnings and goals into the Equity Audit implementation planning.

- Co-created implementation steps based on outcomes and recommendations of the Community Equity Audit, to advance equity across all facets of the Town in different phases.
- Continued partnership with the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Belonging (DEIJB) and the Superintendent of the Arlington Public Schools to align Town and School District DEI initiatives.
- Partnered with the Arlington Public Schools Director of DEIJB and Arlington Police Chief Flaherty to conduct a story exchange with officers and students of color, with the intention of building relationships and empathy.
- Attended the 2023 NAACP National Convention in Boston and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) in Seattle.
- Participated in the Interfaith Security Summit, hosted by the FBI Boston, Massachusetts State Police, and Combined Jewish Philanthropies, with members of APD.
- Participated and completed GARE/REMAP program, which included monthly in-person peer learning session with other municipal leaders and racial equity experts and facilitators.
- Presented at the NAPA Conference on Social Equity Leadership in Kansas City, MO, highlighting the DEI work and initiatives the Town has pursued and its role in establishing the MA DEI Coalition.

DEI Programs and Projects

- Partnered with the Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observance Committee to put on the 35th annual celebration, which returned as an in-person program at the Town Hall Auditorium.
- Coordinated and supported Arlington Human Rights Commission Black History Month programming and annual banner project, in partnership with the Commission for Arts and Culture (ACAC) and the Black Joy Project hosted an artist talk featuring the youth winners of the banner project and a Black-Owned Business Pop-Up.
- Held first annual town-wide Lunar New Year celebration at Town Hall, in partnership with the Council on Aging, Human Rights Commission, Enhance Asian Community on Health (EACH), Ottoson Middle School Mandarin class, and the Arlington High

School Asian American Coalition (AHSAAAC). The event attracted close to 300 people and forged sustainable partnerships with the Town's largest minority group.



Lunar New Year celebration at Arlington Town Hall.

- Coordinated the first Resources and Connections Fair in partnership with the Human Service Network which brought local organizations and Town departments to Town Hall to showcase service offerings and programs in Arlington.
- Worked with the Arlington Historical Society to ensure representative voices and input were incorporated into the planning of the monument to be placed in the Old Burying Ground to commemorate Menotomy's Enslaved and Persons of Color who were buried there.
- Participated in Monument Dedication Ceremony, and held Juneteenth Celebration, with food, musical performances, and poetry.
- Participated in Municipal Immigrant Support Network (MISN) and continued to advance strategies and communications with neighboring municipalities, community organizations, APS, and Town entities to respond to increasing newcomer population.
- Continued participation in two-year Language Access Pilot Project, which consists of researching best practices in language accessibility and translation, attending language roundtables with other municipalities and professionals, and learning how to creatively provide resources and services to the community.
- Provided leadership to the MA Municipal DEI Coalition, which was established in early 2021 to connect DEI municipal leaders across the state to share challenges and best practices.
- Collaborated with ACAC and the Black Joy Project, providing monthly gatherings and workshops, and held culminating event: INSPIRED, an art exhibit and celebration of Black Joy.

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Departmental Support

- Supported the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) by leading engagement work for the MBTA Community Zoning Project, and by providing guidance to the Electrify Arlington project, Cooke's Hollow project, Master Planning project, and Economic Development projects.
- Reviewed designs of Cooke's Hollow to include accessible pathways and seating.
- Provided guidance to Arlington Libraries on community engagement for Fox Library feasibility study, coordinated language access partners in Town, and co-hosted public input meetings to address accessibility issues in future Fox renovation.
- Met with each Town department to process the recommendations of the Equity Audit and discuss long-term department level equity goals.
- Supported the Clerk's Office in exploring changes to practices in demographic data collection, and voting.
- Worked with the Human Resources Department to provide case-by case training and responses to challenges employees may encounter and reviewed language of updated job descriptions.
- Collaborated with the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure playground accessibility in renovations at Robbins Farm Park, Parallel Park, and Menotomy Rocks Park.

Goals Moving Forward

- Provide, improve, and build up educational programming and opportunities for employees and community members, including additional training and workshops.
- Continue alignment of DEI programming and equity initiatives with the DEIJB Director for Arlington Public Schools, including increased programming for multicultural holidays.
- Establish outreach and communication initiatives to improve access and expand community engagement and develop Community Engagement Guidelines for the Town.
- Implement phase 1 of Language Access plan which includes expanding our resources such as Lexikeet and translator tools, providing additional support for employees, strengthening immigrant & refugee support, and hosting cultural celebrations.
- Support DPCD by assisting with engagement strategies regarding the Master Plan and the MVP 2.0 plan, amongst other needs.
- Oversee the Municipal Equality Index (MEI)

Working Group in addressing areas in need of change, specifically improvements to the Town's laws, policies, and services affecting the LGBTQIA+ community.

- Continue to provide support to Human Rights, Disability and LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commissions.
- Revitalize Community Conversation series to be collaborative with multiple departments and community stakeholders.
- Advance the Black Joy Project into the next phase, in which community members take on leadership and organizing programs, with support from staff.
- Formalize and continue participation in the MA DEI Coalition and contribute to the creation of the MA Municipal Guide 2.0.

ARLINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The mission of the AHRC is to work individually and collaboratively with various groups in the community to celebrate the ever-changing tapestry of our Town and to emphasize, through educational and social outreach, the danger of intolerance at every level. The School Committee, Town Moderator, and Town Manager, with approval by the Select Board, have appointing authority for thirteen members of the Commission.

The Commission continued to address human rights issues challenging those who live, work, pass through, and visit Arlington. 2023 was another year of changes that required the community and the Commission to adapt alike. The AHRC piloted and adopted hybrid meetings combining in-person and virtual participation. The Commission sponsored and held community activities, discussions with police, and outreach to community groups to foster respect and facilitate training, education, and incident reporting with the police, the town, and the schools to increase protection for all in Arlington.

Arlington values equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to building a community where everyone is heard, respected, and protected.

The AHRC held regular monthly meetings throughout 2023, with Working Groups meeting monthly or as appropriate, based on need. The Commission has converted to a co-chair system in which one co-chair serves on a calendar-year basis and the other serves on a fiscal-year basis. This ensures that the two co-chairs do not change at the same time. Christine Carney continued as co-chair from 2022 through all of 2023. Drake Pusey was elected in June to serve from July 2023 to June 2024.

Discussions about diversity, racial equity, and inclusion continued within the Town. Heightened awareness of racial and religious persecution domestically and internationally allowed for further reflection by the community on these issues within our Town. Anti-Semitism has become a leading cause of incidents in Arlington. To address incidents of racism, homophobia, religious persecution, and other human rights violations in the Town of Arlington, the AHRC focused on the education and social awareness of the community. The AHRC promoted conversation and action by addressing individual incidents of human rights violations, fostering debate about critical human rights issues in Arlington through sponsored programs, and fostering community activities to make Arlington a more welcoming and inclusive town.

As in previous years, Working Groups focused on specific issues and often included community volunteers. Schools and Education, Events, and Outreach met monthly and reported to the full Commission at regular meetings to ensure transparency. Other Working Groups focused on digital communications and explored housing issues.

Additional 2023 AHRC Highlights

- The AHRC continued to offer the public a forum during each monthly meeting to allow community members to address the Commission on matters relating to equality and fairness. Throughout the year, several community members took advantage of this opportunity.
- Commissioners attended the Arlington Farmers' Market throughout July to increase community engagement with the AHRC.
- Engaged with the community via social media. Facebook stats include 104 posts, 1,022 followers, 75 new followers in 2023, 942 likes, and a total reach of 7,011 people. The AHRC Instagram account currently has 462 followers, an increase of 100 from 2022. AHRC continues to maintain a YouTube page to post recorded events. Due to concerns regarding the level of toxicity on the Twitter (X) platform, the AHRC retired its account.
- Commissioners participated in the Massachusetts Association of Human Rights Commission (MAHRC) meetings and the APS Superintendent's Diversity Advisory Committee.
- Co-sponsored the Town's Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration and worked collaboratively to support its efforts. Co-sponsored additional events with the Arlington LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission, APS LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Task Force, Network for Social Justice, Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, Robbins Library, Belmont Celebrates Indigenous Peoples Day, Arlington Chapter of Moms Demand Action to End Gun Violence, and the Arlington Historical Society.
- In celebration of Black History Month, expanded our collection of banners along Mass Ave highlighting Black Entrepreneurs, and supported the Artist Talk and Black-Owned Business Pop-Up.
- Issued three formal AHRC Statements: one on the Police Killing of Sayed Faisal in Cambridge, the second endorsing Raise the Age, and the third on the Violence in Israel and Gaza.
- Promoted events and engagement opportunities in the news section of AHRC website, including the 35th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observance, Lunar New Year Celebration, winners of the Black History Month Banner Contest, and a call for nominees for Arlington Civilian Police Advisory Commission (ACPAC).
- Composed and sent regular emails to AHRC subscriber list, including emails on bullying, America's ranking on global human rights, Hispanic Heritage Month, Banned books, Indigenous People's Day, and Hispanic Stories in Arlington, the Commission's first bilingual communication.
- Received 26 incident reports from the Arlington Police Department related to human rights violations occurring in Arlington. Received 9 incident reports via the website intake form, 4 inquiries via the website intake form, 2 school-related incidents reported to individual commissioners, and 1 incident reported on social media. Incidents were reported by residents, schools, and the APD, as follows: 2 Anti-Transgender, 12 Racist (Anti-Black, Anti-Asian, Anti-Hispanic), 1 Anti-Immigrant, 9 Anti-Semitic, 7 Homophobic, and several reports of stolen or destruction of social justice-themed lawn signs.
- Continued to work closely with the APD and APS to learn of, track, and, where necessary, address incidents impacting human and civil rights.
- Continued to work under a Memorandum of Agreement that includes the APS, AHRC, and APD and sets forward Guidelines for Responding to Hate Incidents in the Arlington Public Schools.

The Commission generally meets every third

Wednesday of the month at 8:00 pm. Visit www.arlingtonhumanrights.org/ to stay updated on the work of the Commission, or contact the co-chairs at ahrc@town.arlington.ma.us.

COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

The Arlington Disability Commission (ADC) continued to provide information, guidance, and technical assistance to Town officials, residents, organizations, and others to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to Town facilities, services, and programs.

The Commission continues to strengthen connections with other boards, commissions, and community groups, both within Arlington and in neighboring communities. Commission representatives join the two other DEI Commissions (Human Rights and LGBTQIA+ Rainbow) on a monthly basis to share updates and seek out opportunities for collaboration. There is Commission representation at the monthly meetings organized by the Commissions on Disability Alliance (CODA), which have been a valuable source of information on how surrounding towns and cities are serving residents with disabilities. Throughout the year, commissioners have participated in several trainings and events organized by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD).

In March the Commission nominated resident Kari Sasportas to the Arlington Civilian Police Advisory Commission (ACPAC) as the ADC's representative. Arlington Town Meeting voted to establish the ACPAC to provide an opportunity for increased understanding and trust between the community and the Arlington Police Department (APD), assist members of the public as a resource in the event they have complaints, concerns, or commendations about policing in Arlington or specific police personnel, and to provide APD and Town management with a public forum for feedback about police personnel, policies, procedures, and data.

In June the Commission purchased two floating beach wheelchairs to be used at the Arlington Reservoir. After the Reservoir renovation project was completed, the beach area was made accessible with the installation of a mobi mat that allows wheelchairs access across the sand beach and into the water. With the inclusion of these beach wheelchairs, the swimming area is now fully accessible for residents of all ages.

The Town, with support from the Commission, continues to make good progress towards implementing necessary changes identified in the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (released in 2020) to make public buildings and spaces ADA-compliant. Notable examples that were completed in 2023 are: the Flagpole Plaza outside Town Hall and Whittemore Park. With advocacy from the Commission, Robbins Farm Park will be the Town's first playground implementing 100% Universal Design

principles. In partnership with the Department of Public Works, the Commission also submitted an application to continue the curb cut ramps program using Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds, which was approved.

Paul Parravano, an esteemed member of the Commission sadly passed away on December 9, 2023 from a battle with pancreatic cancer. Paul brought significant insight to the Commission and was a strong advocate of disability rights and accessibility in both Arlington and Cambridge. The Commission will honor Paul's legacy by continuing to call for accessibility improvements in the Town and uplift the concerns that need to be addressed for community members with disabilities.



Floating beach wheelchair for resident use at the Reservoir.

Additional Disability Commission 2023 Highlights

- Worked with the Town Clerk to advertise accessible voting options ahead of November's Special Election including voting my mail, voting online, and accessible in person voting. Continued to monitor voting accessibility issues.
- Awarded \$180,000 grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability to build covered protected adaptive tricycle storage next to Ed Burns Arena.
- Participated in the Resources & Connection Fair held at Town Hall in April. This event gave residents the opportunity to connect with local organizations for resources in food scarcity, employment, housing assistance, childhood education, mental health support, and disability services.
- Partnered with Arlington Public Libraries on Arlington Reads Together, selecting as featured guest speaker Judy Heumann, *disability rights activist and author of Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of Disability Rights*. Two commissioners, Paul Raia and Ileana Gatica, spoke on a panel about their experiences living in Arlington.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

- Co-sponsored two performances of True Story Theater which highlighted stories about living with disabilities.
- Launched a monthly newsletter covering disability related news, events, and programs in Arlington.

The Commission will continue to advocate for the rights of Arlington residents living with disabilities. All interested residents are encouraged to attend the monthly public meetings, on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00 p.m.

LGBTQIA+ RAINBOW COMMISSION

The LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission was established by Town Meeting in 2017 with a mission to promote equality-affirming policies regarding the full spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities, and to bring greater visibility and empowerment to the LGBTQIA+ population through education, advocacy, and collaboration with other Town agencies, schools, and community groups.

During 2023 the LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission fulfilled its mission in the following ways:

Events, Organization and Participation

- Co-hosted several LGBTQIA+ Community Conversations with the Arlington Public Schools' Rainbow Task Force. These conversations covered topics including the role of libraries in making LGBTQIA+ themed books and resources available to students and families and making health and wellness curricula inclusive of all genders.
- Participated, with their families, in the annual Arlington Heights Window Painting. The Commission sponsored windows painted by QSA, GSA, and Rainbow Alliance student groups from Pierce Elementary School, the Gibbs and Ottoson Middle Schools, and Arlington High School, in addition to its own window.
- Organized three rainbow crosswalk paintings for Pride Month, in Arlington Center at the intersection of Mystic Ave. and Massachusetts Ave.; in Arlington Heights at the intersection of Park Ave. and Massachusetts Ave.; and in East Arlington at the intersection of Lake Street and Massachusetts Ave.
- Hosted Pride Festival at Whittemore Park, Corner of Mass Ave & Mystic St in Arlington Center. Despite inclement weather, over 200 people attended, including members of the

Select Board, School Committee, Arlington Police Department, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Division, Council on Aging, and numerous other Town entities.



One of three rainbow crosswalk paintings, this one at Lake Street and Mass Ave. in East Arlington.

- Hosted an LGBTQIA+ Community Picnic at Robbins Park, for community members to gather and connect.
- Co-sponsored a candlelight vigil on November 20th in honor of Transgender Day of Resilience on the lawn at First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington. First Parish Minister Rev. Erica Richmond offered remarks honoring the lives of transgender and gender diverse individuals who have been lost to bias-related violence. Rainbow Commissioners Kym Goldsmith and Fiona Perry called on community members to honor those lost to violence by taking action to support Arlington and Greater Boston's richly diverse transgender and gender diverse community.
- Co-sponsored a number of additional community events including: LGBTQ Seniors and Friends + weekly virtual meetings; Robbins Library Queer Book Group; Robbins Library screenings of Reel Queer films; Arlington High School's GSA t-shirt sale fundraiser for GLAAD; and SAGE Table Intergenerational Dinner of LGBTQIA+ people and allies, organized by and co-hosted with Arlington's Council on Aging.

Collaborations with Arlington Town Government and Commissions

- Worked closely with Arlington Rainbow Task Force to advocate for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in school curricula, data, and professional development and to support school commu-

nity equity work.

- Continued conversations with Arlington Police Chief Julie Flaherty and members of her command staff about issues related to policing and the LGBTQIA+ community. Chief Flaherty and her command staff attended the November 20 Transgender Day of Resilience in a public display of support for the town's transgender and gender expansive residents.
- Supported Arlington DEI Division efforts to participate in the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index for which Arlington has earned a score of 100 in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.



Advocacy & Social Justice

- Drafted the annual Pride Proclamation from the Select Board.
- Responded to community member challenges to gender inclusive curriculum by alerting community members of the threat and organized a strong community response to a scheduled School Committee hearing on the challenge. When the challenge was withdrawn, the Rainbow Commission re-directed community members intent on attending the hearing to a community gathering at First Parish to celebrate inclusivity in civic affairs.

The commission generally meets on the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm in person, at the Arlington Community Center, and via Zoom for those who wish to attend virtually. All meetings are open to the public and the commission encourages community members and representatives from other Town committees and commissions to attend. For more information, see www.rainbowarlington.org/ or email rainbow@town.arlington.ma.us.